

EXTENSION CONFERENCE TO APPRIASE AND PROFIT FROM—

RECENT EXPERIENCES AROUND THE WORLD IN THE DEVELOPMENT
AND ADAPTATION OF EXTENSION METHODS AND TECHNIQUES

Date of conference: May 16-20, 1949

Place: United States Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

Sponsoring agencies: Extension Service, M. L. Wilson, Director
and
Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations,
Fred J. Rossiter, Associate Director,
United States Department of Agriculture

In 1944, the Extension Service and the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations of the Department of Agriculture jointly sponsored a conference on the contribution that extension methods and techniques might make to the rehabilitation of war-torn countries. The conference brought together the available information on extension methods in nine major areas of the world, and analyzed past experience in extending scientific information to rural people. Special care was given to the importance of cultural understanding as a basis for developing effective extension work.

Since the conference of 1944, many of the countries of the world have sent people to the United States to learn first-hand about American agricultural methods especially as applied to extension work, and extension workers from the United States have, upon invitation, visited countries and given advice and counsel in appraising the efforts of those countries to apply the findings of science to farm, home, and community problems.

We can assume that as a result of the increased attention the many countries have placed on attacking some of their pressing problems through the extension approach, there have been many profitable experiences in adapting and developing educational methods to meet a wide range of needs. However, we do not know how extensive such developments have been, and the impact they have made on the culture. The purpose, therefore, in calling a second conference is (1) to outline systematically either the kind of problems the various countries have, or those problems on which they seem likely to ask our help in solving through an extension approach; (2) to appraise the experiences the countries have had in the extension field since our 1944 conference; and (3) within the framework of each country's culture, to outline the kinds of extension approaches that seem appropriate for given types of problems.

The conference findings will be valuable to the United States Department of Agriculture and to the land-grant colleges in understanding the kinds of problems the countries concerned expect to solve through the extension approach and in providing the informational basis for evaluating and adjusting an effective extension training program for agricultural students and technicians coming to the United States from other countries of the world.

It should be equally valuable to the land-grant colleges and universities in helping them appraise the need for and kind of training required in preparing students for foreign agricultural service. With the type of orientation this conference should provide, we may hope to keep our training program geared closely to the needs of the countries from which these students and technicians come, and do a better job of selecting and training our own people who accept foreign extension assignments. Past experience has shown that extension, wherever it is found, must be oriented to the culture of the area. We want, therefore, to understand the culture of other countries, to be prepared to continue to assist them in a forthright and constructive manner, and to give them whatever they need and request in the way of guidance in the application of extension methods and adoption of extension principles in keeping with the countries' needs and culture.

The conference itself is not an international conference. It will concern itself with the appraisal and adaptation of extension methods and techniques oriented to the needs and culture of a number of countries. Those who will be invited to take part in it will be persons who either have had experience in extension in other countries and have studied and understand the culture of rural people in the respective countries, or who are interested in preparing themselves for this type of work. The conference will not concern itself with the making of plans or the building of a program for agricultural extension work for the entire world. It will, however, outline problems and appraise the experiences countries have had in the extension field and suggest kinds of extension approaches that seem appropriate for given types of problems.

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